

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EURE-00 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /068 W

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P 061659Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4039

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 16081

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCENE IN LIGURIA

1. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR RECENTLY VISITED GENOA WHERE, IN COOPERATION WITH THE CONSULATE GENERAL, HE ATTEMPTED TO SURVEY THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS IN THE REGION OF LIGURIA. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS SUMMARIZE THE RESULTS OF THAT SURVEY. A FULLER REPORT FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM (A-507, NOVEMBER 6, 1975).

2. APPROXIMATELY 90 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF LIGURIA (1.87M) LIVES UNDER REGIONAL, PROVINCIAL AND CITY GOVERNMENTS RUN BY COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST COALITION. MOST OF THESE HAVE BEEN NEWLY INSTALLED SINCE THE LOCAL ELECTIONS OF JUNE 15, 1975. IN MOST CASES THESE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COULD HAVE BEEN FORMED WITHOUT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION, BUT THE CHOICE WAS MADE BY THE SOCIALISTS WHO PREFERRED COALITIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS TO CONTINUATION OF OLD ALLIANCES WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, REPUBLICANS, AND SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS. IN DEFENDING THEIR CHOICE THE SOCIALISTS ARGUE THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE DEAD ON THEIR FEET, WITHOUT IDEAS, AND OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE AND THEIR PROBLEMS. IT CAN ALSO BE ADDED THAT THE SOCIALISTS HAVE MANY MORE POSITIONS OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR COALITIONS WITH THE COMMUNISTS THAN THEY FORMERLY DID IN COALITION WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

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3. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, WHO DOMINATED LIGURIAN POLITICS FROM WORLD WAR II UNTIL THIS PAST SUMMER, APPEAR TO BE DISCOURAGED, DEMORALIZED, AND DISUNITED. MANY OF THE LOCAL LEADERS APPEAR TO HAVE GIVEN UP POLITICS TO DEVOTE FULL TIME TO THEIR PROFESSIONS. AS A RESULT THE GRASS-ROOTS PARTY ORGANIZATION HAS DISINTEGRATED. THE OLD LOCAL KING-PIN, EMILIO TAVIANI, APPEARS TO HAVE RETIRED FROM ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL POLITICS. THE CHURCH AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ARE EQUALLY INACTIVE IN LOCAL POLITICS. ONLY THE NEW REGIONAL SECRETARY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, FAUSTO CUOCOLO (A FULL TIME UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR), SEEMS TO HAVE ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM FOR REBUILDING THE PARTY. HOWEVER, FOR THE MOMENT, HE IS MORE OR LESS ALONE AND THERE ARE NEITHER THE MEN NOR THE ORGANIZATION NECESSARY FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICALLY IMPORTANT CITY ELECTIONS IN GENOA ON MAY 1976.

4. THE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOCIALISTS HAVE VIRTUALLY THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE WORKING CLASS AND A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE YOUNG. BOTH ARE TRYING HARD, WITH AN APPEAL TO CONSERVATIVE THEMES (LAW AND ORDER, EFFICIENCY, PROFITABILITY OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, ETC.) TO ATTRACT MIDDLE-CLASS VOTERS. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE CLEARLY HELPS THEM IN THIS EFFORT AND, GIVEN THE DISASTROUS CONDITION OF THE LOCAL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, IT SEEMS MORE THAN LIKELY THAT BOTH PARTIES WILL REGISTER INCREASED STRENGTH IN THE MAY 1976 CITY ELECTIONS, PRIMARILY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, LIGURIA
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ROME16081
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750386-0167
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751168/aaaacinh.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <05 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL SCENE IN LIGURIA
TAGS: PINT, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006